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THE CENTENNIAL OF THE "CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON."

BY KUNO FISCHER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY BENJAMIN RAND.

I.

The appearance of Kant's "Critique of the Reason" marks the turning-point which separates the first from the second period in the history of modern philosophy, the former of which had its beginning in England and France, and came to its close in Germany, while the latter is of German origin, and issued from Prussia. The birth of such works dates from the time when they are first published—that is, when they have emerged from the obscurity of the workshop into the full light of the world. The "Critique of Pure Reason" was published in midsummer of the year 1781, simultaneously with Schiller's first tragedy. Kant dedicated his work to the Prussian Minister Von Zedlitz, who had proved himself favorably disposed toward him and his work. He signed the dedication on March 29, 1781, and probably wrote also at the same time the (not dated) Introduction. The larger portion only of the work was then printed, and some months elapsed before the entire publication was completed. It is there-

fore wrong to regard, as is repeatedly done, the date of the dedication as the birthday of the "Critique of the Reason," since this work was written previously, but had not yet been published. It appears from the letters which were written at this time by J. G. Hamann, of Königsberg, to Hartknoch and to Herder, that Hamann, to whom (simultaneously with Kant) the proof-sheets were forwarded, could not finish reading the text before the last week in June, and not until four weeks later did he receive a complete copy, sent from the hand of the author. He wrote a notice of the work on July 1, 1781, for the Königsberg "Times," but which for certain reasons he left unpublished. Its concluding words read as follows: "The fortune of an author consists in being praised by some and known by all—and what the reviewer regards still as the acme of genuine authorship and criticism—to be understood by a very few." Events verified this saying. The first public criticism came from the philosopher Chr. Garve, of Breslau, and made on Kant the worst possible impression. It appeared in an extra of the Göttingen "Literary Advertiser" on January 19, 1782. The publication of the "Critique of Pure Reason" falls, therefore, in the middle, and its first distribution in the second half of the year 1781.

II.

Before we attempt to realize the importance of this epoch-making work we will direct a hasty glance at its origin, so far as knowledge of this has come to us from the study of the philosopher. Kant, after fifteen years waiting as *privat docent*, was made a professor when forty-six years of age. It was necessary for him to make the customary defence of a printed discourse before entering upon his professorship of Logic and Metaphysics. This took place on August 21, 1770. The theme of the Latin inaugural dissertation was, "The Forms and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World." His respondent was Marcus Herz, a young physician of Jewish descent, with whom Kant had intercourse as teacher and friend, and whom he assured that his ideas had been searched by him (Herz) to their very depths. M. Herz went to Berlin immediately after the disputation, and was there daily a welcomed guest in the house of Mendelssohn. He acquired in time a very creditable position both as physician and

philosopher, and became, through his conversations, and later by lectures before a mixed audience, the first expounder of the Kantian philosophy in the Prussian capital. After his marriage with the daughter of a Portuguese Jewish physician, who was famed for her beauty, intellect, and grace of manners, it was the attractive power of Henrietta Herz which made his house between 1779 and 1803 one of the most frequented literary centres in Berlin. The letters of Kant to M. Herz are most interesting, and are likewise the only letters which give us an accurate insight into the origin of the "Critique of the Reason."

The problems of the Critique, and, indeed, the first of its fundamental discoveries—the new doctrine of Space and Time—were contained in the inaugural dissertation. It is easy to see that the question as to the "Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World" coincides with the question as to the fundamental forms and limits of the faculties of Sense and Intellect; for the Sense-world comprises the objects as they affect our faculty of Sense (*Sinnlichkeit*), while the intelligible world comprises the Presentations (*Vorstellungen*) as they are in themselves independently of the corresponding sensible phenomena and of the nature of our faculty of Sense, and as they can be grasped only by the intellect. The philosopher, therefore, must at once undertake the task of setting forth in a large work "The Limits of the Sense and Reason." But the domain of the reason in its whole extent embraced the principles of Natural Science, of Morals, and of Æsthetics, or, otherwise expressed, "The Metaphysics of Nature, the Metaphysics of Morals, and Æsthetics." Kant intended at this time to present as soon as possible the entire content of the critical philosophy in one complete work. The tasks, however, divided themselves, and a succession of fundamental critical questions arose, each of which demanded for itself a separate work. Twenty years (1770-'90) elapsed before the plan was realized which Kant had marked out in a letter of June 7, 1771, to Herz as his project.

One of these tasks pressed immediately to the foreground the metaphysical problem, or the question concerning the knowledge of things both theoretical and practical. The solution of this problem the philosopher called a "Critique of the Pure Reason." Its plan and limits were yet much too widely applied. The cri-

tique of the pure reason must be limited to the theoretical science of cognition, the establishment of our knowledge of things through the Sense and Reason. Kant hoped to publish such a work within three months; so he wrote on February 21, 1772. The three months grew into nine years. Again and again during this long period he sees the end nearer at hand than it is, again and again it removes to a distance; in vain he hopes to be able to reach it in the summer of 1777; the next winter, the following summer pass by, and still his hopes, like unfulfilled promises, abide; and even at Christmas of 1779 this hoped-for end is not yet reached. After the difficulties of the research are conquered, the presentation and explanation follow, far greater difficulties than Kant had imagined. "What I call the 'Critique of the Reason,'" he writes on the 20th of August, 1777, "lies like a rock in the way. What retards me is nothing more than the endeavor to make everything appearing therein perfectly intelligible." Genuine clearness demands that one unite amplification and perspicuity with brevity. Brevity at the expense of clearness costs the reader a useless sacrifice of time, and it is also time for which the author is responsible. Kant has taken well to heart the striking words of the Abbé Terrasson: "Many a book would be far shorter if it were not so short." But there exists also a breadth of amplification at the expense of perspicuity if thereby the whole is to us only obscured. "Many a book," Kant has said in order to complete the saying of Terrasson in a no less striking way, "would have been much clearer if it had not been intended to be so very clear." To give an exemplary style of clearness to the most difficult of all books was the mark which was before the eye of the philosopher in his "Critique of the Reason," but which he was unable to reach to perfection at the first throw.

The work had finally so far prospered that Kant, after having first deeply meditated on the whole, then having sketched the single portions in writing, and arranged them in their connection, could now put his hand for the last time to the task and attend to the composition and copy for the press. This occupied between four and five months of the year 1780. In October, Hartknoch, of Riga, offered to publish the work, and before the end of the year the printing began. The three months were nine years, and the promised "little work of a few pages" had become a corpulent

work, the number of whose sheets exceeded two alphabets, and of which Hamann jestingly said : "It does not correspond with the stature of the author."

On the 1st of May, 1781, Kant wrote to his pupil and friend in Berlin : "A book will be published by me during the Easter fair under the title 'Critique of Pure Reason.' It will be printed for Hartknoch's Publication by Grunert in Halle." "This book contains the result of all the manifold researches which began with the ideas over which we disputed under the title of *mundi sensibilis et intelligibilis*. It is to me an important matter to submit the entire result of my efforts to the review of the man who possessed such insight as to deem my ideas worthy of consideration, and who was so sagacious as to search them to their depths."

III.

A century has passed since the birth of this work, one of the most difficult and most mature which has ever appeared, and today the sense of the Kantian teaching is under discussion as if it were of yesterday, and as if the succession of systems which proceeded from it belonged not to the fruit by which the tree is known; as if only now a "philological" interpretation of his phrases could lead to an understanding of the philosopher, which a century moved and filled by the ideas of Kant failed to obtain. The single portions, however, of the work of a great thinker can only rightly be understood when the problem and innermost thought of the whole are evident to us. We will therefore attempt to render the fundamental ideas so clear that our readers shall be spared those difficulties which obscurity in expression and fulness of detail occasion. Wherein lay the necessity of a new epoch in philosophy, the task which Kant undertook, and in the original comprehension of which he perceived the newness, as likewise the distinguishing characteristics, of his work ?

All the speculation before his time pretended to be an explanation of the *thing*. Each one strove in his own way after a system of the universe, and made a more or less perfected scheme which embraced the all-of-things. So long as there yet existed by the side of such a universal knowledge no special science which branched into the particular domain of things, philosophy reigned without a powerful opposition, and had undisputed possession

of a large kingdom. But as soon as the special sciences appeared, and these provinces were cultivated, opponents arose in an ever-increasing number, who disputed the authority and even the right to existence of philosophy. In antiquity, metaphysics, and, in the middle ages, that which took its place, theology, had easy reception, for the experimental sciences were as yet immature and infant children. They grew up through the discoveries which made the modern epoch and changed our views of the world in all departments ; special research increased, and, in the same proportion as the territorial dominion of human knowledge enlarged, the imperial authority of philosophy declined. Were the kingdom not to perish, as of old the Roman-Germanic empire, it must take possession of a new and permanent position, which would be recognized and uncontested on the part of the experimental sciences.

It was *superfluous* if it only repeated what the experimental sciences had discovered and announced ; it was of *evil* if it should search into the same objects independent of all experience and oppose trustworthy results with uncertain or false speculations. It must avoid experience, and yet never dared lose sight of it. It must, in the first place, leave the field of empirical facts, the domain of the knowledge of things, and take for its problem the possibility of experience itself, the possibility of a cognition of things in general, the solution of which was to give a new view of the world. This was the only possible expedient which remained for philosophy ; it was likewise a necessary task, demanded by the adaptation of the intellect to the acquisition of knowledge.

The fundamental question was not now, How are things and their phenomena possible, the data, whose sum we call nature or reality ? but it was, How is the fact of experience and the cognition of things themselves possible ? It is evident that this question cannot be solved by experience, for this is not and cannot be its own object.

A scientific research is therefore demanded which will be distinct from and yet persistently directed upon experience. The position must be found from which one can behold for himself the entire domain of experience, or the knowledge of things in general. Kant placed philosophy upon this point and made the egg easily

enough stand on its end, although so many hands had attempted this before his time, but unsuccessfully.

The question concerning the possibility of knowledge was as such not new, for there had been very many theories of knowledge in the history of philosophy. The problem had often enough been asked and investigated in the ancient as well as in the modern period before Kant, but had always been answered in this way : that, viewed strictly, the conditions upon which the fact of cognition depends *are themselves, indeed, the entire fact of knowledge*, although in its simplest form. Thus, the fact in question was not explained, but presupposed, no matter whether these presuppositions consisted in the affirmation of innate ideas or in the sensuously given and united impressions, whether this connection was called causal connection or succession in time. The philosophers before Kant explained cognition by a kind of knowledge-substance, just as once the physicists explained the phenomena of heat by a heat-substance, or combustion by the phlogiston. Thus the fact of human knowledge remained unexplained ; and since the assumptions made were not accidental, but followed necessarily from the nature and trend of their systems, it also remained *inexplicable* : it was regarded as a dogma, which sceptics themselves, in spite of every denial, allowed to continue and even employed.

Kant probed this dogmatic position of all the philosophy which preceded him, and brought it to an end with the very simple and obvious claim, that the conditions of knowledge and experience could not themselves indeed be knowledge or experience, but must precede them, as the factors the product, and the cause the effect. There is a great difference between that which goes beyond or surpasses (transcends) our knowledge and that which *precedes* it, and by Kant is designated with the word *a priori*, or "transcendental." The former lies beyond the horizon of our knowledge, the latter on this side. It was to these latter *a priori* conditions of our knowledge and experience that Kant directed his inquiry. His research is in this respect *new*, and distinct from all previous philosophy : it deals with the conditions of human knowledge, not presupposing, but investigating, testing, sifting—that is, it is not dogmatic, but *critical*. The objects of the critical examination are the factors of knowledge, *i. e.*, our faculties of reason ; hence the name "*Critique of the Reason*" for the Kantian investigation. But

it asks how the reason originates experience, and not how it comes forth from the latter filled with manifold empirical intuitions: it treats, to speak Kantian, about the reason *a priori*—the pure reason as the sum-total of the transcendental faculties; hence Kant called his work the “Critique of Pure Reason.” The word “transcendental” signifies with him both the conditions which precede experience and the inquiry directed into these; it is, in the first case, equivalent to *a priori*, and in the second synonymous with “critical”; hence the critical philosophy is called also the “Transcendental Philosophy”; and the “Critique of the Reason” heads each of its divisions and each of its inquiries with the title of a “transcendental.” It is well to explain the sense of this term, since it is customary to present all sorts of mists and reveries under this word, which is either misunderstood or not understood at all.

Kant’s epoch-making achievement lies in the *critical* direction which he has allotted to and pioneered for philosophy.

IV.

In order correctly to estimate the importance and extent of this epoch, we must make clear *what is called critical thinking*.

Objects can be held either dogmatically or critically: dogmatically, if one takes the objects as given and perceives only their attributes; critically, if one searches into the conditions from which they and their attributes proceed—that is, investigates their origin and follows the circumstances of their evolution. The origin and development of objects are the problems of the critical thinking; the presentation of the historical development of things is its labor and result. If we accept a system of the universe as given and completed, and seek to discover the laws of its present organization, we treat it dogmatically; on the contrary, critically, when we ask the question, How has the universe originated, and by what changes has its present state gradually arisen? It is precisely the same with the contemplation of the earth and all terrestrial life in the entire diversity of its forms and kinds, with the contemplation of mankind and its races, people, and languages, religions and religious records, poetry and the fine arts; in a word, with the whole world of nature and art. I need only mention the names Kant and Laplace, Lamarck and Darwin, Fr. A. Wolff and G. Niebuhr, D. Fr. Strauss and F. Chr. Baur, in order to evoke

the record of a century which, upon all sides, seeks for its view of the world's historical development by means of *critical* research. I do not speak of this or that product of investigation, but of the critical tendency of mind in which even opponents must share in order to combat those conclusions to which they are averse. Any one of our great literary men, since the days of Lessing, could be brought forward as an example to show the position one occupies in the critical knowledge of things; but above them all stands Kant, *because he applied the critical method to knowledge itself*, and thereby became the founder of a period which has, with good reason, been styled the *critical*. The last century is called the period of Clearing-up (*Aufklaerung*); ours is the period of Criticism. It is in this fact that we discover the bearing and significance of the Kantian epoch.

From a conception of the Kantian problem we obtain at once an idea of its extent, which is found to far exceed that of all previous theories of knowledge. It is the neglect or ignorance of this fact which prevents an insight into the spirit of the Kantian teaching. The factors of knowledge must be discovered, and from these the possibility of experience must be explained. This was the task to be accomplished. Now, it is evident that, without the possibility of experience, there exist no objects of *possible* experience, no objects of the same, no sum-total of the same, which latter is called in German the "Sinnenwelt" (Sense-world). The question, therefore, concerning the possibility of experience, concerning the origin of knowledge, must coincide in a certain sense with the question concerning the origin of the Sense-world. The Kantian philosophy, from the way in which it has conceived its task, must demand and lay hold of a point of view in which the Sense-world appears no longer as something given, but as something which issued forth by virtue of the reason; a point of view in which there is made evident the origin of the Sense-world from out of the conditions of reason and its activity.

Here the whole chasm between the dogmatical and critical way of thinking opens up, and we perceive the extraordinary effort of mind which is necessary both in the discoveries of the Critique and in its understanding. The difficulties which have to be overcome in new conditions of life and of knowledge are always as great as the interval between these and the accustomed course of

life and consciousness, and they appear in their most obstinate strength when we are compelled to give up the natural, and, as it were, the rooted point of view of our presentations. Thus it is with the critical way of thinking as opposed to the dogmatical. I will endeavor to explain the difficulties with which it deals by a comparison which has a deeper than a mere figurative relationship to the subject in hand. From the natural point of view which we here occupy, the universe appears to us as an actually given object, as a sphere in whose centre rests the earth, around which sky and sun, moon and planets describe their orbits in various periods of time. The ancient astronomy was founded on the view which required an artificial apparatus for the explication of the given phenomena of the common and special revolutions of celestial bodies, and a Ptolemaic assumption of epicycles for the explanation of the apparently confused courses of the planets. Copernicus saw that the position of the ancient astronomy was untenable, and that the root of its error lay in the geocentric view. In order to understand the planetary universe, the natural view arising from the first immediate sensuous beholding must be abandoned, and the heliocentric view must be adopted, in which the human spirit conceives of the earth as in its horizon, discovers it among the planets, and looks down upon its terrestrial habitat. Now, it is evident that the dweller upon the earth does not observe the rotation of its axis or the central movement of his own world; and that from this lack of observation, this ignorance of his own movement, proceeds that necessary illusion which causes us to perceive a daily rotation of the firmament, a yearly movement of the sun around the earth, and the anomalies in the movements of the planets which revolve around the same centre as the earth. The Copernican system refutes and destroys the Ptolemaic. It recognizes the fundamental error of the latter, and explains, from the geocentric standpoint, all those apparent movements which this considers and must consider as incontestable facts; it substitutes the simplest of solutions, and one most in conformity to nature, for an artificial and insufficient hypothesis. Just as the Copernican system is related to the Ptolemaic in Astronomy, and as the heliocentric standpoint is related to the geocentric in the view of the planetary world, so in general is the critical way of contemplation related to the dogmatical and the transcendental point of view to the natural.

The example and teaching of Copernicus give us involuntarily an important guide. As it is with our view of the material world in general, and of the planetary system in particular, so likewise it may be and is with the Sense-world. It is to be anticipated that similar fundamental errors will produce similar results; that we, unconscious of our own intellectual activity in the formation of our entire world of sensuous presentations, will regard this latter as a given object, and take our own doing for the state and properties of things external to us; just as in the universe we perceive the movements and the conditions of movements of heavenly bodies other than the earth, because we do not observe the motion of our own world. A self-deception similar to that which the geocentric standpoint causes controls our entire idea of the world, and requires, in order to be made evident, and its power destroyed, reflection and knowledge on our part; except that here the basis is far more extensive and much more concealed, and for that reason more difficult to discover than the source of the geocentric error which pertains to our cosmical abode. In order to perceive the order of the planetary world, and in it the movement of the earth, Copernicus must introduce into Astronomy the heliocentric point of view. In order to discern the order of the Sense-world, and in it the activity of our reason, the philosopher must rise to the critical (transcendental) point of view, from which the world of phenomena is seen in Space and Time. The heliocentric view stands in the same relation to the human abode as the critical view to the human reason: the horizon of knowledge of the one extends as far as the region of the heavenly bodies, that of the other as far as Space and Time, or as the Reason and its boundaries. *Kant became the Copernicus of philosophy, and would be it.* Our comparison is one after Kant's own heart, and was employed by him, for he has willingly and repeatedly compared his work to that of Copernicus, as Bacon has his to that of Columbus.

V.

We have just expressed the difference between the dogmatical and critical way of thinking by saying that in the former the objects are assumed to be given, while, on the contrary, in the latter it is asked, How have they originated? Now, it is evident that no object can appear or be realized in our reason without the aid of

our own creating activity. The view according to which things are given us from without is therefore only possible when one does not perceive, or does not know, or forgets the activity of his own mind. This state of unconsciousness or self-forgetfulness characterizes the dogmatic way of thinking. *Not to know what one does*, and for that reason to regard our own work as an alien product, is the very substance and explanation of the dogmatic state. If this activity has its source deeper than our consciousness, or, what amounts to the same, if it precedes the latter, then it acts unconsciously, and the dogmatic view of objects becomes the most natural thing in the world ; it is the first and immediate way of Presentation, the refutation of which is possible only when the unconscious production is revealed and raised into consciousness. In this consists one of the most difficult tasks of the critical thinking. If the creating activity is a conscious one, it can only fall into oblivion through entire lack of reflection on our part ; but the result will be the same, since in such a state of forgetfulness we would regard our own work as a foreign product, only that here the folly of the dogmatic notion comes immediately into view. No one thinks the geocentric view of the world foolish until its falsity has been perceived, but every one laughs at the man who was greatly astonished that it had been discovered what the stars were named ! And yet the first error is just as dogmatic as the second ; for they both follow necessarily from ignorance of our own doings, only we cannot perceive the movement of the earth, but are well aware that all nomenclature is a work of human invention. To one who does not know or forgets the latter fact, the names of the heavenly bodies must appear like labels placed upon them from without, which belong to them as signs to public houses, and then it is certainly right to wonder at their telescopic discovery.

Ignorance of one's own action is the innermost source of all dogmatic bearing, of all the self-deception, blindness, and folly exhibited in the choice of our aim and opinions in life. Knowledge of our own action, or self-knowledge and self-reflection as applied to the aims of a true science and to a philosophy of life, is throughout the task of the critical thought. Kant has justly been compared with Socrates. The point of agreement lies in the last-mentioned characteristics. Self-knowledge, knowledge of one's

own action as applied to the true human purposes of life, was the theme by which Socrates in the ancient and Kant in the modern period made epochs in philosophy. They agreed in the manner of statement of the problem, but entirely disagreed in the method of its solution.

Our idea of the world has arisen unconsciously, and is therefore by birth dogmatic. The natural consciousness continues to hold firmly to the dogmatic position. The dogmatic philosophy rests upon this fundamental view, and must have developed and exhausted its systems in all possible directions before the critical revolution could take place. It is therefore not surprising that the epoch of the latter was not realized until more than 2,000 years had elapsed in the succession of human ideas. The dogmatic philosophy is the historically developed presupposition of the critical, as the Ptolemaic system is of the Copernican.

There exists in the course of development of every man, and even of those who are called to the highest scientific discoveries, a state of mind in which the dogmatic bearing is alone in conformity to nature, and the critical is utterly impossible. One must have knowledge of a multitude of objects, and have acquired a wealth of presentations, before one can take an interest in their production, and can ask the question, How have these objects originated? One must possess Presentations before one can ask, Whence do they come?

When a story is related to a child, and he listens with eagerness and the closest attention in order to satisfy the wants of his imagination, it never occurs to him to inquire, Where did this story have its origin? Who is its authority and voucher? He asks, indeed, whether the story is true, but not from any desire for knowledge, but because he *wishes* it to be true, since an actual occurrence makes an entirely different and far stronger impression upon the fancy of a child than an invented story.

Hence, he is easily and readily contented if he is assured the account is true. For the same reasons, the simple popular belief demands in religious things the actuality of the entire sacred history, and receives any diminution of the historic reality, or any mythologic method of explanation, as a weakening of the sublime impression and an unsettling of belief.

When pictures are shown to a child, his attention is entirely

taken up with the objects presented. He breaks forth in exclamations over the picture, and wants to know what is represented, but does not ask by whom? If we tell him the woman in this painting is Mary with the Child Jesus upon her arm, he is fully contented. That the painter is named Raphael signifies nothing to him. He will not ask, Is it genuine or spurious? Copy or original? Such questions cannot enter his mind, for they presuppose Presentations which the child has not and cannot have. One sees how necessary and indispensable is the dogmatic way in the enlargement of our world of presentations, and how inconsistent and ridiculous would be the demand to think critically from the commencement. Just as the dogmatic philosophy is necessary and indispensable in the progress of human ideas, so likewise is the critical philosophy impossible in the beginning of a philosophic contemplation of the world.

Not merely the presupposition but the *object* of the Critique is our knowledge of things in their inborn dogmatic condition. Clearly, the fact of knowledge must exist before; and, in order that its possibility and legitimacy can be investigated, it must be given, or originated, in uncritical ways apart from reflection, in order to call forth the question, How is it given? The critical philosophy stands, therefore, to our natural (dogmatic) knowledge of things (the latter being taken in its widest signification, which includes also the dogmatic philosophy) as physiology to life, optics to seeing, acoustics to hearing, grammar to speech. By a false reversion of this relation one can easily ascribe to the critical philosophy a folly which would be as nonsensical as if it meant or must mean that a knowledge of things must be delayed until we have grounded it by explanation and proof; that one must first fathom how one knows before one can venture with the faculties of cognition into the stream of things. Truly, Kant would then, as Hegel has sarcastically suggested, be like that man who would not go into the water until he had learned how to swim. To hold to our comparison of the natural knowing with the swimming, Kant is to the one what Archimedes, who discovered the laws of swimming, is to the other. When we heed well the succession of our perceptions and cognitions, they are obvious enough: first the natural seeing, then the optics, then the disciplined, tested, critical seeing whereby we are made conscious of

all the unavoidable optical illusions, and of all the phantoms of appearance. The natural seeing is the subject of optics, the critical is the result. Entirely similar is the succession of stages in the development of philosophy: first the natural knowing and the dogmatic systems, then the critique of the reason, and from this proceeds a trained, instructed, and regulated knowledge, which pierces the self-illusions of the reason or the dogmatic phantoms, and avoids all systems and artifices of knowledge founded upon them. When Kant, in this sense, cried Halt to the continued working and experimenting of a certain metaphysics, he would not, to use once more the foregoing figure, warn against the swimming in the water, but against a neck-breaking flight through the air.

VI.

The problems of the "Critique of the Reason" must have conformed to the age from which it proceeded, and it is, therefore, befitting for us at its Centennial to realize its historic character and the course of the inquiry which this has determined. For this purpose, let us inquire into the state of philosophic knowledge which Kant saw before him. I refer to the dogmatic systems, which the modern era since the beginning of the seventeenth century had produced. They are founded entirely upon the requirements of the natural knowledge, and are understood through the latter without a learned prolixity.

The natural reason, with confidence in its powers, demands a cognition of things by one's own impartial and unprejudiced research. This point of departure is true for the whole of modern philosophy. That it goes courageously to work with good faith in the natural light of reason, gives it its dogmatic and naturalistic character. But in this way a controversy arises which necessitates a separation into opposing directions in the course of development of philosophy. The only way of knowledge as viewed by the one is a sensuous and rightly guided experience and observation, and, by the other, clear and distinct thought independent of the sensuous perception. We name the first kind of philosophy Empiricism, the second Rationalism. The legitimacy of empiricism is self-evident; that of rationalism is, that through sensuous perception we perceive things only as they appear in our organs of sense, and not as they are in reality, or in

themselves independent of these organs. The clear and distinct—that is, self-evident,—thought consists in a constantly progressing series of proofs and deductions after the example of mathematics, and must therefore be based upon immediate and certain axioms or principles, from which all the rest follow. Such a teaching of principles is called *Metaphysics*; and hence Rationalism is developed in a series of metaphysical systems. The entire controversy of modern philosophy, accordingly, oscillates between *Metaphysics* and *Experience*, and Kant would be the judge that investigates and settles this suit in his “*Critique of the Reason*.”

Bacon had founded Empiricism in two epoch-making works—“*De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum*” (1605), and his “*Novum Organum*” (1620). He described the way of experience, the inductive method, which leads from the perception of facts to the knowledge of causes, but did not investigate the elements in which experience itself consists. This problem Locke solved in one of the weightiest and most potent works in modern philosophy, his “*Essay concerning the Human Understanding*” (1690). He established the position of Sensualism, which is, that all experience is perception, external and internal (sensation and reflection), and all objects of perception are ideas or impressions of the outer and inner sense. But, it will be asked, What are impressions? Here arises a new contrast within Sensualism; impressions are either only perceptions (presentations), and then all our objects of cognition are ideas, and there are, in reality, only the perceiving and perceived existence, only spirits and ideas; or they have a purely material nature, are changes in matter, and then there exist, in fact, only matter and movement. The first view is called Idealism, and the word ought, in the first place, to designate only this standpoint, which Berkeley established (1710–’13); the second view is called Materialism, which the French Philosophy worked out in the last century, and completed in the “*Système de la nature*” (1770). There is still a third inference. If all the objects of conception are only impressions, they are composed of *single* phenomena, without a universal and necessary bond; then every sort of connection is made by ourselves and strengthened by habit, and thus without the objective and valid worth of knowledge. There exists, then, after all, no true knowledge. This is the standpoint of Scepticism, which David Hume, one

of the most sagacious of the men who sprang from the philosophy of experience, set forth in his "Treatise on Human Nature" (1739), and his "Enquiry concerning Human Understanding" (1748). Of all the earlier investigations, these have exercised upon Kant the greatest influence. Hume proved that a true knowledge of things was unexplained, inexplicable, and impossible, by all the previously made presuppositions of philosophy, and thus he caused the question to be more profoundly and searchingly made than heretofore: How is the fact of knowledge possible? First the scepticism, then the criticism; first the great sophists of antiquity, then Socrates! "Without Berkeley, no Hume; without Hume, no Kant," said Hamann; and Kant has himself affirmed that Hume was one of the weightiest of his predecessors, if not the weightiest. The first reviewer of the "Critique of the Reason" did not know how to discriminate correctly between Berkeley and Kant. When Kant wrote the "Prolegomena," for the explanation and defence of his "Critique of Pure Reason," he wrote in the Introduction: "I freely acknowledge that it was a suggestion made by David Hume which many years ago first awoke me from the dogmatic slumber, and gave to my researches in the field of speculative philosophy an entirely different direction."

If, then, the philosophy of experience has led, in the way here described, to scepticism, whither has rationalism tended on the opposite side? I will answer briefly, and allow the different metaphysical systems which have here been set up to so come under the natural light of reason that their theme will immediately be made evident. There are three principal systems, each ruled by a fundamental view, which the state of the world forces upon the unprejudiced mind with all the strength of natural truths. These truths are: 1. The *opposition* between conscious and unconscious being, between spirit and matter; 2. The necessary and universal *connection* of all things, in spite of that opposition; 3. The *continuous gradation* which suffers no break in the nature of things, and adjusts all dissimilarities by gradual transitions. The first idea filled and controlled the teaching of *Descartes*; the second, the system of *Spinoza*; the third, that of *Leibnitz*. These are, as it were, the three words of the naturalistically conceived metaphysics before Kant. There exists no fourth. Now,

since each of these primitive truths comes to the natural understanding, it will strive involuntarily to unite all three, and to avoid only those conclusions which are in opposition to it and its experience; it affirms, with Descartes, the absolute distinction of soul and body, but without reasoning that then all bodies must be powerless, and all beasts sensationless; it affirms, with Spinoza, the universal causal connection of things, but without disavowing the value of aims and powers that conform to purposes in the world; it affirms, with Leibnitz, the continuity of things, but the principle upon which his teaching rests—that all existence consists of representative units of power (monads)—appears to it paradoxical and contrary to experience.

The outcome of all this is evident. A combination of metaphysical systems will be striven after, which will harmonize with and stand the test of experience—a universal system which satisfies the requirements of cognition and settles all controversies, not barely the strife between the metaphysicians, but also that between rationalism and empiricism, between metaphysics and experience. This system of the demanded eclectic kind, matured with the amplest clearness, composed methodically, and set forth in pure German, is the undeniable and weighty service which Christian Wolff has performed for the philosophy and culture of his time as of his people. He founded the school from which the German professors of philosophy of the last century went forth, among them the first teachers of Kant.

The effect of the Wolffian teaching, however, extended farther than school and chair. What lay at its foundation and formed the peculiar active force of this system, which was methodically set forth, was by no means a philosophic profoundness, that discovers concealed truths and works them out regardless of consequences, and unconcerned as to what experience and the common consciousness say thereto; but it was this very common consciousness with its experience, the so called “common sense,” which feels itself secure in the possession of its natural truths, and does not sacrifice any one of these, for the sake of consistency, for a philosophic fancy of the school, or for any artificial system of thought. Nothing was, therefore, more natural than that the eclectic mind, together with that of the “common sense,” should seize the rudder of philosophy, should strip off the chains of

the Wolffian system, which the master had worn with so much *grandézza*, and should now appear as a popular philosophy, as a philosophy for the world, in opposition to the school. Such was the character of the German "Clearing-up," which was in sympathy with Rousseau and the Scotch school, and which belonged to the second half of the last century, thus immediately preceding the critical epoch. Kant has always taken this popular philosophy into consideration.

The outcome of the philosophy of experience was the Scepticism of Hume. This called forth, in opposition to itself, the Scottish school, in the philosophy of "common sense" introduced by Thomas Reid (1764). The outcome of Rationalism and of Metaphysics was Eclecticism. This made and dissolved the system of Wolff. From it also proceeded the German Clearing-up, which harmonized in spirit with the Scotch school. This kinship of spirit was made known by the noble Christian Garve, one of the most influential thinkers and authors of the German *Aufklärung*, in his translation and exposition of "Ferguson's Moral Philosophy" (1772), and also of the celebrated standard work of Adam Smith. His "Ferguson" was highly stimulating to Schiller, then a pupil in the ducal military academy, and exercised a remarkable influence on the formation of his early philosophical ideas. The representatives of the German Clearing-up held all opposition to the sound common sense as absurd, and all discord between head and heart as a sign of mental wandering. The elucidation of natural truths is their theme, the diffusion of this light is their mission, the popularizing and beauty of instructive speech is their task. It must be acknowledged that men like Moses Mendelssohn, who was, in his time, the most celebrated among the philosophers of the German "Aufklärung"; like the gifted but early deceased Thomas Abbt, who began to employ, with great success, the style of the essayist, after the example of the French and English, and in conformity to the taste of the age; and like John Jacob Engel, who was the contemporary and friend of Garve, and the polite literary leader of the common sense—have recognized and fulfilled these functions. Over against the extremes of philosophy, these contrasts between Dogmatism and Scepticism, between Rationalism and Empiricism, between Idealism and Materialism, stands the German Clearing-up, in the same relation as in Engel's

"Philosoph für die Welt" Mr. Tobias Witt stands to the extremists in his neighborhood, who ruined their cause every time, in that they always, by their method of speech and action, became extravagant in opposite directions. "I, who have always lived midway between two modes of speech," says Tobias Witt, "I have taken notice of both modes, and now I speak, according to the time and occasion, sometimes as Mr. Grell, and at other times as Mr. Tomm."

VII.

There is no doubt but that the so-called common sense, with its natural truths, has an actual influence, and rules the world in spite of all systems and doubts of philosophers. The full importance and recognition of this fact can no longer be doubted. But certainly the question upon the decision of which the advance of philosophy depends is, whether, in the recognition of common sense, its own establishing is precluded, or is not, rather, demanded? Whether our common consciousness ought to be the last of all foundations, or not, rather, the first of all problems in philosophy? The men of the Scottish school, as of the German Clearing-up, took "common sense" for a basis, and asserted its truths to be the fundamental facts and the guide in all philosophizing. They desired to return to the point which preceded, in the origin of modern philosophy, the schism between Empiricism and Rationalism. Such a retrogression of things is, however, always impossible, and, when striven after, appears only as a forced and unsuccessful attempt. The next advance of philosophy demands that the common sense, with its so-called natural knowledge, this presupposition of dogmatic cognition, cease to be regarded as the basis of philosophy, and be made into the first of its problems—into the object of its investigation.

This Kant has done. How is the fact of our common or natural consciousness possible? The fundamental *fact* of the dogmatic becomes the fundamental *question* of the critical philosophy. An advance more simple or more in accordance with the law of intellectual development could not be conceived. The dogmatic philosophy with all its marked contrasts and the eclectically conducted Clearing-up with its labored adjustments indicate, in the clearest manner possible, the task of the "Critique of the Reason" and the aim of its research. The systems of knowledge independent of

and in conflict with experience having failed, the cognition of things in full harmony with experience is the end sought, the problem to be solved, and the thing to be explained. If those conditions in the organization of our reason are discovered and pointed out which create experience in its universal and scientific validity, but which cannot produce any other kind of knowledge, then the aim is attained, and the problem is solved which Kant saw before him. The general theme of the "*Critique of the Reason*" lies, therefore, in the question, How and under what conditions is knowledge in conformity with experience? how is experience as science, methodically arranged experience, possible? Since, now, all experience consists in the uniting of the objects of our perception or of phenomena, the theme of the "*Critique of Pure Reason*" divides itself into three main problems: 1. How can sensations give rise to Phenomena? 2. How can phenomena give rise to Experience? 3. How can the truths of experience give rise to Science or a methodically arranged knowledge of the phenomenal world which unceasingly progresses, ever widens its sphere, and constantly strives after the unity of a totality, although it never attains to the perfection of the finished whole? These originations are the creation or work of the reason, and are produced, in the first instance, through the intuitive, in the second through the thinking; in the third through the ideal-giving faculty. Manifestly these powers and doings are so related to one another that they together gradually produce knowledge in conformity with experience. The intuitive reason (Space and Time) transforms our impressions into phenomena, and thus furnishes the material which the understanding (through its power of uniting concepts) changes into truths of experience, which latter again offers the material for the reason to transform into Science or to systematically employ in its strivings after an arranged and perfected unity. This is not the place to discuss at length the solution of these three problems, the second of which proved the most difficult; but we have plainly enough before us, as in the whole issue of the "*Critique of the Reason*," the *development of the Reason*, or the unfolding and intensifying of our faculties of cognition as impelled by the desire for knowledge.